

REMARKS

Figures 8 and 9 have been amended to address the objections to the drawings. Figure 8 has been amended to change reference character 118 to 110 and Figure 9 has been amended to change reference character 12 to 122. With respect to the published application, the reference character "1" does not appear.

Claims 3-7, 8, 11 and 13-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. This rejection is respectfully traversed. With respect to the term "generally" of claims 3 and 8 and the term "general" as used in claims 5 and 7, it is submitted that the terms "generally" and "general" have well understood meanings, including when considered in the context of the specification. With respect to the "aligned perpendicular" element of claim 3, it is submitted that Figures 8 and 9 show channels aligned generally perpendicularly to the longitudinal axis. With respect to the "velocity effective to..." element of claim 3, it is submitted that it is the "tangential velocity" that is "effective to generate a circular flow...." With respect to claim 11, it is submitted that the term "effective to provide" is sufficiently clear. As the Office action recognizes, the temperate and depth depend in part upon the type of food product and the means used for slicing. With respect to claims 8, 13 and 14, it is submitted that the terms "substantial" and "substantially" have well understood meanings, including when considered in the context of the specification. It is submitted that the element "sufficient to provide steam treatment..." of claim 15 is clear from the specification. Claims 11 and 15 have been amended to remove the terms "predetermined."

Claims 1-2, 9, 11, and 15-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,711,981 to Wilson et al. ("Wilson"). Claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,741,536 to Mauer et al. ("Mauer"). It is respectfully submitted that claims 1-2, 9, 11 and 15-16 are not anticipated by Wilson and claims 1-7 are not anticipated by Mauer.

Claim 1, and the claims dependent therefrom, recites a "steam sleeve." Neither Wilson nor Mauer disclose a steam sleeve. Instead, Wilson discloses a steam chamber 14 and Mauer discloses a heating unit 60. Both the steam chamber 14 of Wilson and the heating unit 60 of Mauer are sized many times larger than the dimensions of the food

products, as shown in Figure 1 of Wilson and Figure 1 of Mauer, and thus are not sleeves.

With specific respect to claim 2, Wilson does not disclose the circulating of a flow of steam with a channel in an interior of the sleeve as disclosed in claim 2 of the instant application. While Wilson does have an inlet and an outlet for steam, it does not circulate the steam, nor is there a channel in an interior of the chamber. In Wilson, the steam simply goes into the chamber through an inlet, and comes out through an outlet; no circuitous or circular flow is established in a channel within the chamber.

With specific respect to claim 2, Mauer does not disclose an outlet for removal of the steam and condensation from the sleeve, as described in claim 2 of the instant application. The condensate that drips through the perforations in the conveyor belt accumulates at the bottom of the unit.

With specific respect to claim 3, Mauer also does not disclose the step of introducing the steam into the entrance of the channel with a tangential velocity effective to generate a circular flow directing at least some of the steam condensation away from the outer surface of the food product. Instead, the condensation falls through the perforations in the conveyor belt.

With specific respect to claim 6, Mauer also does not disclose the step of providing more than one set of helical channels each having their own inlet for introduction of the steam into the sleeve.

Claims 12-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson. Given the above discussion of Wilson with respect to claim 1, from which claims 12-14 depend, it is respectfully submitted that claims 12-14 are not unpatentable over Wilson.

Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,098,307 to Pikus. Given the above discussion of Wilson with respect to claim 1, from which claim 3 depends, it is respectfully submitted that claim 3 is not unpatentable over Wilson in view of Pikus.

Claims 3-7 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,682,827 to Gressly. Given the above discussion

of Wilson with respect to claim 1, from which claims 3-7 and 10 depend, it is respectfully submitted that claims 3-7 and 10 are not unpatentable over Wilson in view of Gressly.

Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,153,572 to Kennedy. Given the above discussion of Wilson with respect to claim 1, from which claim 8 depends, it is respectfully submitted that claim 8 is not unpatentable over Wilson in view of Kennedy.

In view of the foregoing comments, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-16 are respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required in this application to Deposit Account No. 06-1135.

Respectfully submitted,

FITCH, EVEN, TABIN & FLANNERY

Date: July 30, 2007

/Jon A. Birmingham/
Jon A. Birmingham
Registration No. 51,222

FITCH, EVEN, TABIN & FLANNERY
120 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 1600
Chicago, Illinois 60603-3406
Telephone: 312.577.7000
Facsimile: 312.577.7007
477318